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ABSTRACT

This presentation briefly reviews literature on first year teachers, summarizes findings from naturalistic research conducted in a first year teacher's classroom, and identifies implications for the preparation of teachers. Research studies indicate a need for more rich descriptions of teaching experiences to identify problem areas and to assess what it is like for teachers experiencing and resolving problems. The experiences of particular seventh-grade science teacher are described, with focus on the teacher's expectations of students, or herself and of problems, her use of humor as a coping mechanism, her expectations of feedback and evaluation, and her fear of developing an attitude of cynicism. Issues raised from the teacher's experience concerned preparing teachers for the realities of teaching, providing a nondidactic learning experience for teachers, and training teachers to use evaluation techniques and opportunities, including self-evaluation. (CB)

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UNDERSTANDING PROBLEMS FACED BY FIRST YEAR TEACHERS
A Naturalistic Study

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UNDERSTANDING PROBLEMS FACED BY FIRST YEAR TEACHERS
A Naturalistic Study of One Teacher

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The first year of teaching provides an intense learning experience for most teachers. Suddenly in the "real world", they face the challenges of curriculum decision making, policy making, discipline, evaluation and instruction. Understanding the problems first year teachers face could provide information useful to their training. This presentation briefly reviews literature on first year teachers, summarizes findings from naturalistic research conducted in a first year teacher's classroom and identifies implications for the preparation of teachers.

Literature review

When Veenman(1984) summarized much of the literature recently, he noted the following methodological concern:

> Even though we know what problems trouble beginning teachers, we still know little about the person-specific and situation-specific nature of these problems.... Most studies used the questionnaire or the interview to collect data about the perceived problems of beginning teachers. This procedure is useful for listing these problems, but it gives little or no information about the features of educational situations that teachers experience as problematic, about the psychological dimensions of meaning underlying these situations, and about the significant personal characteristics of beginning teachers which interact with these situations (p.168).

Although the literature on beginning teachers' problems contains several

studies which employ qualitative research methods, our review confirmed Veenman's conclusion. More context-rich, case specific data needs to be appropriately collected and shared with those who prepare new teachers.

Cruickshank and Broadbent (1968) collected data from 163 first year teachers who, by means of self-reporting, identified problem areas. A total of 32 significant problems were identified and then simulated to test the effectiveness of simulation for presenting and being exposed to critical teaching problems on student teachers. Felder (1979), also using a self-report method, studied 33 beginning teachers who made tape recordings of their concerns, problems and means for coping with problems at the end of four different periods during the first nine weeks of teaching. The product was lists of problem areas reflecting each of the four periods which were then compared and contrasted to show the shift in priorities and concerns during the first nine weeks of teaching.

Franc, (1970), in Problems Perceived By Seventy-five Beginning Elementary School Teachers, addressed four general questions using a ten-item, open-ended questionnaire and a partially structured interview guide. They were: 1) What problems are perceived by beginning teachers in an urban setting? 2) How does the teacher see his/her role in the problem context? 3) What are the sources for help and how are they perceived by the teachers? and 4) What are the perceived sources of greatest on-the-job satisfaction during the first year of teaching? The product of this study were lists of answers pertaining to each of the four questions.

Bouchard and Hull (1970), recognizing a need to identify teacher problems, employed an interviewing method for studying 53 teachers and 19 principals on beginning teacher problems. Their results were also lists of

problem areas along with evidence that induction programs need to address those areas. Further, they concluded that the interviewing method was especially successful for identifying teacher problems.

Applegate, et al. (1977) conducted an extensive qualitative study using 7 researchers who observed and interviewed 18 teachers during the first four months of teaching. The results focus on two areas: 1) first year teachers' changing perceptions, and 2) first year teachers' relationships with others. While the results of this study yielded some lists of problems in these two foci, Applegate et al. combined anecdotal records, informal conversation and observation data in a descriptive discussion of beginning teachers' problems.

In their comprehensive review of literature on beginning teachers' problems, Applegate et al. (1980) have divided the literature into four areas: 1) advice columns which appear in teachers' periodicals, 2) essays by professionals (contributions made by Hannam, Smyth, and Stephenson, (1976), Foster and Jacobs (1970), and Krajweski and Shuman (1979) are examples of this literature), 3) quantitative studies which, usually during a single collection of data, gather information on a limited number of variables through questionnaires, interviews or observations , and 4) narratives, often in the form of self-reports, which aim at giving accounts, some more descriptive than others, of the first year of teaching (for example, contributions made by Ryan (1974) and Gray (1968)). The studies in the fourth category are especially interesting because they come the closest to describing what it is like, as a beginning teacher, to experience, endure and resolve the problems which are confronted in the first year. These studies, however, are often limited because the scholarly reflections are based only on self-reports.

Johnston and Ryan (1980) in Research on the Beginning Teacher:

Implications for Teacher Education, review the literature of non-research and research professionals. While also identifying the areas identified by Applegate et al. (1977), they discuss, separately, the area of qualitative research on beginning teachers' problems. They conclude that the past five decades of research on the beginning teacher have yielded extensive specifics on the professional problems of beginning teachers; however, the descriptions of the problems are somewhat shallow, making what is emerging, only a "sketchy image of the professsional and personal lives of beginning teachers." (Johnston and Ryan, 1980).

According to Johnston and Ryan (1980), the data base of knowledge on beginning teachers indicates that discipline and classroom management are most frequently reported as critical problem areas. Johnston and Ryan's report was a review and, therefore, generalized the conclusions of the research.

It is interesting to note that the particular studies mentioned previously, while supporting Johnston and Ryan's claims, provide meaningful details which go beyond their claims. For example, Felder's study (1977) supports Johnston's claim that discipline and classroom management are problems during the first several weeks of teaching. By the ninth week of teaching, however, concerns about meeting students' needs and relating to parents replace discipline concerns as being critical problem areas. The 32 significant problems identified by Cruickshank and Broadbent (1968) support both Johnston and Ryan, and Felder while further identifying specific problems within the areas of discipline and classroom management. Further, Cruickshank and Broadbent add the identification of the problems of dealing with personal emotions (ie. enthusiam and nervousness) while teaching.

It is valuable to generalize across studies, as Johnston and Ryan (1980) have in one portion of their paper, or within a study, as Cruickshank and Broadbent (1968) do, to reduce available information into a few problems areas which can be addressed in induction and teacher training programs. However, when looking closely at each study, it is obvious that such a reduction does not do justice to each of the individual teacher's experiences being studied. Although we are able to create lists of challenges and sketch descriptions of beginning teachers' experiences from the data which have already been collected, there is a need to do more of what Applegate et al. have done in order to provide rich descriptions; not only to identify *what* the problem areas are, but *what it is like for teachers* experiencing and resolving the problems.

Naturalistic Research

The principal data gathering procedure for this study was participant observation. Two researchers spent about one hundred hours throughout the year in two classrooms, observing teachers and students, interviewing the teachers repeatedly and administering a survey to the students. Detailed field notes were compiled by each researcher. There they recorded observations, interview transcripts, personal reactions, initial analyses and the beginnings of their reports. They frequently shared notes with one another and with the teachers, stimulating discussion and further collection and analysis.

The analysis activities were initiated as soon as the data began to be gathered and continued on into the second year with several follow- up interviews. The intent was that from this detailed descriptive analysis and synthesis across the two case studies, hypotheses regarding the needs of first year teachers and the appropriate roles to be played by teacher preparation

programs could be generated.

Two junior high science teachers, one for seventh and the other for eighth grade students, and their associated students participated in the study. The school used a rotating schedule so each student was registered for seven classes but attended only six classes per day, allowing the teachers one preparation period each day. Each teacher observed for this study had about 180 students rotating through these classes in groups ranging from 18 to nearly 30 per class.

The focus of the remainder of this report is on the seventh grade teacher, Miss Wilson. Always interested in science, she never considered teaching until she was nearly through her bachelor's degree: "When I was in high school, my principal said, 'Have you thought of teaching?' and I laughed. I said, 'Me teach? No. I can never teach. It doesn't interest me.' I thought about going into nursing.

I thought about going into environmental conservation. I thought about pre-med but then decided I really didn't want to be a doctor and have to study so hard. Then I had a chance to do some teaching in my church and I found I really liked it. A teacher is sort of a performer and I enjoyed that part of it. Too, I like this age group. It just evolved that I really liked science and really liked teaching. So it was like, 'What should I do with my life? Well, you could be a science teacher.' So I did."

Although she wanted to teach at the senior high level, the chance to take a job at the school where she student taught brought Miss Wilson to the junior high. The rest of this presentation outlines some of the experiences she had, her reactions to those experiences and what she learned from them.

In order to understand meanings behind human experience, such as Miss

Wilson's, Miles and Huberman (1984) recommend the use of conceptual "bins" in the analysis of qualitative data. Although several more bins have been identified in the analysis of the data collected during these case studies, five are discussed in this paper. In the following pages each bin is briefly described and examples from the field notes are presented. Then, in the final section of the paper relationships between bins and implications of these findings for the preparation of teachers are discussed.

Expectations of the Students. Although she had student-taught at a high school and in the eighth grade, Miss Wilson had never taught seventh grade before her first day as a seventh grade science teacher. She began that experience with high expectations of the students; but even by the next year she was still suprised at how different the children were from what she had expected. She encountered a culture shock as real as if she had moved to a foreign land. "I was really naive last September. I thought that all I had to do was go into the classroom with the basic assumption that I'm a human and these students are just basic human beings too. I thought that if I would treat them fairly, they would do the same with me. "

After just one month, Miss Wilson began to realize she did not know what to count on from students. "Before I began to teach, I thought using the phrase *'shut up'* was inappropriate. Even now I feel a little anxious about saying it. But it works. When I finally get to the point of telling them to shut up, they pay attention to me. " By the middle of the second month, she was beginning to know what she could and could not expect and make that clear to the students.

> The class is about to begin and the students are talking loudly with each other. The bell rings but seems to make no difference in the noise level. Miss Wilson looks back at me [the observer] as she jokingly threatens a boy with the yardstick she carries everywhere. Miss Wilson: "The only reason half of you aren't out in the hallway already is because I am going to give you a new rule. I am tired of saying 'shut up' when you come into class. You aren't in the first grade. If you don't just come in and get busy on the assignment I have posted on the board, you will be sent to the hall and will not get credit for doing it."

Even by the beginning of the second semester, she was amazed that these students still came to class without their assignments. "They leave their work in their locker and then try to get me either to excuse them or take the blame for their losing points for late work. I guess I thought they'd be more responsible."

On other occasions, Miss Wilson acknowledged that to her disappointment, she had to accept the fact that children at this age don't listen, don't think like she expected, don't ask questions, don't take notes unless forced, don't understand simple instructions like, 'do the vocabulary at the end of the chapter,' ignore rules until they break them and are faced with the consequences, and aren't really all that interested in science. "I certainly never anticipated the amount of time I would have to spend getting them to listen, the time I'd have to spend repeating myself. I thought they'd be working on a higher level, both academically and emotionally. I'm often disappointed because I thought I could make a difference and now I feel like I can't. Maybe I'm teaching the wrong age

group. I dream of teaching on a college level where people really want to learn science."

By her second year, Miss Wilson felt she was becoming more accepting of the students' immaturity and was able to be more patient when the students disappointed her. However, she continued to feel challenged by all she didn't understand about the students. "I'm not an expert at what they really need. I know science. If they were the robots I think I expected, I might be able to more satisfactorily give them what they need. But I'm not an expert at what its like being a seventh grader. I never realized that I'd have to be dealing so completely with everything that has to do with being a seventh grader. They need help developing self esteem; they need to feel capable. They need to learn how to be a person. I think everyone who is going to teach students in a junior high should have a psychology class focused on this age group."

A veteran teacher educator summed up the theme of this "bin" this way: "I get depressed after years of observing new teachers. They begin excited and anxious to do something wonderful for kids and humanity. Then they encounter 'reality', finding that many other teachers, parents, administrators and students don't seem to care much about learning." He estimated it takes about one hour of being a teacher for most to realize they had been naive in thinking they could make a difference, and that it takes only about two years for many "to get thoroughly turned off."

Expectations of Self. Along with the reality shock pertaining to her expectations of students, Miss Wilson had naive, high expectations of

herself in the role of a teacher. "I thought my role was pretty well defined. I'd be the giver of information. I also thought I'd be somewhat of a resource where students would come to me to be stimulated with questions. I'd be helping them to take responsibility, being their friend in a way. At the same time I realized I'd have to work with things like self esteem, but I thought I'd be mainly a science teacher. " As she became disenchanted with her expectations of the students, likewise she became disenchanted with her definition of her own role expectations. "I couldn't be just a resource and giver of information. I've had to be a controller. I decide what we learn, who is going to talk and who's not, how long we do one thing and then another, I even decide when people should sit and when they can walk around."

She did not like becoming a controller, but felt she had no alternative given the environment of the school and the fact that she was required to deal with large numbers of students whom she did not understand. "No one likes to look out of control. Its like a noisy class is a measure of incompetence. So, I guess I unconsciously decided that one of the best indicators of my doing my job would be to look *in control*, to have a quiet, busy class. Its the *authority* model. Its not all bad, but it certainly is not the ideal."

> Miss Wilson had organized the class to be working in groups of five. "If your group is going to be rambunctious you'll have to go into the hallway," Miss Wilson threatens. A girl passes a note to another girl. Miss Wilson leans quickly across the table to grab it, but the girl pulls it to her lap. " Give me that note," Miss Wilson demands in an authoritative voice. "No! I'll eat it," the girl responds as she shoves the paper in her mouth and begins to chew. Some of the students watching start giggling and talking to one

another. Miss Wilson backs from the table. "The next person who opens their mouth, out the door!"

While she relied on the controller role, she knew she needed to be more than a controller. "Sometimes I get in a rut and think I'm just a conveyor of facts. I know I have other roles I need to play with these kids. I need to be interested in them as individuals, in their motivation, in their personal lives. But it seems impossible when you have 180 kids. Likewise, I think they need to see me as a real person. If I could be more of a friend, I think a lot more learning would occur. But all of this is a risk because I might lose the control I need in order to function in the system."

In the area of biology, she felt she could do a lot more, at least for the more advanced students. Again, she felt confined by the environment. Tight resources and shortness of time prevented her from covering topics of interest to her in as much detail as she would have liked. As the school year progressed, she found she had less energy and ambition to spend finding creative ways to teach the lessons she did give. " I think at first it was easy to find ways of presenting materials in creative ways, other than a straight lecture. But, I always underestimated the amount of time and energy it would take to cover one unit. I didn't figure in the expense of dealing with the immaturity of the kids, their poor listening skills, their lack of motivation. All that takes a lot of time, especially when you are trying to move from one activity to another. The result is that we can only skim the surface of things I'd like to delve into more."

Miss Wilson thought she would have more fulfilling one-on-one experiences than she was able to actually have. "One day there was a boy in my class who was making a lot of trouble and, as a result, didn't get his

lab done. He was one of these kids I had trouble liking and caring about because he was so obnoxious. We met after school so he could do his lab. As I worked with him, watching him learn and discover, I really came to like and appreciate him. I was fulfilled by that experience. I expected that while teaching I'd feel like that more often because I thought I'd have more experiences like that. There's just so little opportunity for it. I get so caught up in trying to keep control and conveying facts and information, that it makes it hard to really spend any one-on-one time with some of the students who I think really need that sort of thing."

Miss Wilson found herself in a paradox. Her expectations of the students and of herself seemed to have defined each other. When she became disenchanted with one, the other was mutually effected. Nevertheless, she clung to some of her self expectations believing they really were the way she should be. Consequently, she felt caught in another unfortunate paradox: she tried to be a giver of information, a resource and a friend to the students while simultaneously resorting to a controller role in order to function in the system.

Expectations of Problems: Humor as a Means for Coping.

Many of the problems Miss Wilson confronted were related to the discrepancies between reality and her expectations of the students and herself. Inasmuch as her other expectations defined and gave each other meaning, likewise they helped her shape her expectations of the problems she would encounter as a teacher. She recalls taking a one credit hour course that dealt with discipline and behavior problems. "I don't know why, but that class didn't really help me. We did some modeling and

talked about some critical issues and techniques for dealing with them. I think that is where I learned about *time out* and the idea of sending the kids to the hallway among other things. But I really didn't give much thought to real problems like I encounter now."

From her own experience and from the student teachers she had associated with, she said that everyone seems to think about and fear the worst possibilities of being a new teacher. For her, it was the fear of total defiance by an entire class. "I imagined the whole class laughing at me and telling me to my face that I was just a new teacher and that they weren't going to do a thing I told them. I really feared that. I was so worried about that, I gave little or no thought to any other minor problems I might have to deal with."

Miss Wilson's use of the controller role, sending students into the hallway or demanding silence, is one way she dealt with the problems. Humor, a personal characteristic evident in all aspects of her life, is another technique she used, although much more unconsciously. "I'm like an actress in a drama. Perhaps that is a facade to protect me so people don't know the real me. I don't do it consciously, because I think I want to create a safety net, a little distance between me and people I don't know very well. I don't realize it until my friends mention the distancing they feel. I guess I create a kind of barrier of humor to protect myself."

"Sometimes I find myself saying rather strange, even brutal things to the students. I do it as a release, not because I mean it. Like, I warn them that I will staple their lips together or cut off their arm or hit them. They know I'm joking. I say it to release tension I'm feeling. But, I worry that perhaps the kids' self esteem could be damaged by it."

During most any class period Miss Wilson jokingly mocked or teased the students. They nearly always responded with knowing smiles or other jokes. After reviewing an assignment by a student she responded with a twinkle in her eye,"Now, you're not as dumb as you look, are you?" Other comments like, "You're a little liar!" and "You're really not an animal, are you?" flowed comfortably into the conversations Miss Wilson had with students and tended to lighten the atmosphere. Often her joking became threatening when she was frustrated with the students' behavior or when things might have looked *out of control.*

"I suppose when I am most uncomfortable, I joke. Although I really have never thought about this before, I'm beginning to think I use it to make things look like they are under control, as though everyone knows you don't joke when you are out of control. I know I use joking in the hopes that others will like me. That must have something to do with why I use it when things are getting tense in the classroom."

Although she had not given much thought to her use of joking previously, by her second year she was giving some thought to its effect because of her exposure to the observations associated with this study. "I know I use humor all the time, and yet I hardly know anything about the effect I'm really having. I don't think I consciously realize that each of my students are individuals who will be responding uniquely to my jokes. Again, the personalness of our relationships is hindered because I have so many kids. And yet, I don't even pay attention to the fact that I could be perceived in a number of different ways. Its kind of sad because I think of my classes more as individual people than I think of the people in those classes as individual people. I'll say, ' that's a smart class, easy to work

with.' I don't think much about each kid."

In thinking about her use of humor in the classroom, Miss Wilson realized that in addition to her lack of realistic anticipations about her teaching experience, she had not realized the role her personality traits, such as humor, could play in the classroom. " I realize more now than ever how important it is to understand certain things about yourself before you become a teacher. I don't know that part of me [the humorous part] very well and I think that if I did, I'd be more effective as a teacher."

While everyone has their own idiosyncracies which will, in most cases, play major roles in their dealings with others, Miss Wilson's use of humor is one example of how such a trait, as un-understood as it may be, can be a major influence on what happens in her classroom. Without adequate understanding of her possible effects on others because of this trait, she is not sure if humor is being used to the students' advantage or not.

Expectations of Feedback and Evaluation. In light of her desire to do an excellent job teaching, throughout her first year of teaching Miss Wilson was looking for feedback to tell her how she was doing. She looked to the students, other faculty, her principal, to any adult who came in to observe. She felt inadequate but hoped for some positive feedback. Although she recognized her need for corrective feedback, she questioned her ability to receive it. One of her greatest anxieties was realizing her need for feedback and not having it met: "I didn't really give any thought to the whole idea of getting or dealing with feedback before I started to teach. I suppose I was assuming I had a natural ability to evaluate myself,

to know when I was good and when I wasn't and to know how to change. I never thought about how I might know those things. I guess I never thought I'd need any reassurance that I was doing okay."

At the end of a class Miss Wilson seizes and starts to read a note a student was trying to pass. "Its talking about a kid who is in temporary suspension. Nothing all that great. ....I like to get students' notes because I'm paranoid they are about me. They never are."

While showing a video, Miss Wilson becomes frustrated with the steady talking. "You know, you guys are really something. I don't have to get these videos for you, but I do. And you don't appreciate it. You just sit there and talk through it." A boy speaks up. "Oh, Miss Wilson, we appreciate it. We really do." "Then stop acting like baboons," she jests.

Several times especially sensitive students noticed her having a negative day, or a fellow faculty person sponteneously made comments like, "Miss Wilson, I really like you. You're the best." or "You're doing just fine." But she believed this spontaneous feedback was a reflection of her personality, not her teaching. "They never tell me, ' you know, the way you explained chromosomes today was very helpful.' I like getting feedback about my pesonality, but I need some on my teaching as well. That's the kind of stuff I need."

But as much as she said she needed that kind of feedback, she feared it. "I don't know if I'm prepared to hear that my presentations are poor and that the filmstrips are out of date and they really don't like my class. ...I guess I just need to be brave."

At the beginning of a semester a girl stepped into Miss Wilson's classroom. "Miss Wilson, I hate this new class. I want you back." Miss Wilson replied, "You miss me already?" "Yeah, I miss you yelling out

threats to the class." They both laugh.

Miss Wilson was uncomfortable receiving feedback and usually tried to make it humorous. Therefore, she did not glean as much as might have been available from those opportunities. "I'm like that in a lot of situations, not just school. If somebody says something positive about me, I don't want to take any chance at appearing cocky, like I agree with them. So, I joke it off." Recognizing her need for feedback, she used a formal student evaluation form with her students, which proved to be a positive experience. "But those [kinds of feedback usuallty come] long after the critical times when I need help. They've been smoothed over or forgotten by then. I need some way of knowing right then and there, when its happening."

Much of the feedback was not fulfilling to Miss Wilson, however. "What I need is different. Its like, you're stumbling along hoping you're doing well, but never knowing. You're hoping some authority person, some one who knows everything will come along and say, 'you done good'. " This happened at the end of the year when her principal gave her a "glowing" report. "Some of it I believed, but some of it made me think, 'how does he know?' He hardly ever saw me."

When feedback did come, it was difficult for her to interpret and deal with it. "One of the teachers told me that from what he had seen in the few times he has spent sitting in my class this semester, I have made a vast improvement. I was a little offended by that, 'vast improvement.' I didn't think I was doing that poorly before. Its hard to know what to think about people's remarks like that."

A frustration of Miss Wilson's was that she had not expected she

would have to worry about herself so much in the teaching role. "I knew myself pretty well before I started to teach. For example, I know that I have trouble with being too sensitive sometimes, or with being too sarcastic. I somehow thought I'd slip into this little model teacher role devoid of a lot of the personal stuff I deal with in my private life. I didn't really think they'd have any part of my teaching experience. I just didn't realize I'd have to deal with some of my hang-ups in the classroom. I've had a heck of a time figuring out how Debbie Wilson, the person, could become Debbie Wilson, the teacher. Its just a lot more complicated than I was led to believe it would be."

Miss Wilson needed to understand herself in the teaching role; the impact of her personality traits, what instructional techniques were most effective and which weren't, and how she could have had the best influence on the students. "I don't think having other people tell me is enough. I need to decide for myself, but I just don't know how to do that. I suppose self evaluation is a skill and I just haven't developed it yet. Why don't they teach that to us?"

Cynicism. After doing her student teaching Miss Wilson was left with the impression that a lot of the teachers were cynical. She vowed she would not become like that although she was not sure how she would avoid it. The intensity of the first year required her to use a lot of survival techniques. In so doing, Miss Wilson realized teaching was not what she thought it was, nor could it ever be. The students were not what she had expected and she was not the way she had expected. All the previously unconsidered problems, along with the self doubt because of a lack of

feedback, left her with the overall feeling that she could not make a difference in the ways she had hoped. "So much of the problem is because of the monster, the public education system. I feel a lot of despair. There's no way out because I'm never going to change public education; red tape, lack of monies, lack of materials, etc."

In her despair she unconsciously modeled those around her with cynical attitudes. "I think I modeled those people (old teachers of mine as well as fellow teachers here) not only in the classroom, but in their attitudes about it all." She never realized all the idealistic expectations which would be placed on her by the community. "I guess I was a part of that community out there that expects all these things and maybe that's why I was so naive and idealistic to begin with."

By the middle of her second year, she felt less cynical because she was able to improve in some ways and began to believe again that she may be able to make some difference in the lives of her students. She could without being cynical, give meaningful insights to student teachers by exposing them to some of the realities of teaching. She was finding that with some additional experience and training she could have an influence on the students' lives, although it might be in ways quite different from her original hopes.

Discussion

The theme which has emerged pertaining to discrepancies between expectations and the reality of Miss Wilson's experience is marked by comments such as, "I was naive...","I never realized I'd have to be dealing so completely with everything that has to do with being a seventh grader",

and,"I guess I never thought I'd need reassurance." Further, her comment, "It just wasn't what I was led to believe it would be," implies the effect that training, whether informal or formal, has had on her expectations. While it is difficult to determine the essence of her informal and formal teacher preparation experiences, the nature of her expectations suggests she received a rationalistic and reductionistic presentation of the components of teaching.

As a part of of her teaching preparation she had considered the experience of teaching in its reduced components rather than in aggregate. She had studied issues specifically pertaining to the students, to the teacher, classroom managment, discipline and several other critical areas. According to Miss Wilson, the formal classroom discussion of these components was relevant to her experience later. However, the didactic presentation was an abstraction which, for Miss Wilson, was not clear. "Its not so much what they said in my education classes that made me think it would be different than it is. Its what they didn't say. They never made it real. They never said, ' look, everything we're talking about here is going to be different than this. And they never explained how it would be different'."

In addition to classroom preparation, Miss Wilson's student-teaching experiences was a good one. "It was very positive. But its completely different when you're supposed to teach someone else's class than when you have your own." Based on this inquiry, questions can be raised about the relevance of a traditional student teaching experience. It would seem we could compare traditional student teaching to what it would be like for political science students, hoping to become U.S. Senators and

Representatives, to have their primary practicum serving in countries with drastically different governmental philosophies and practices. As Miss Wilson said, "I was expected to substitute for my cooperating teacher, to maintain law and order, under rules I didn't make, nor which I would make." And yet, her experience, supporting the literature, points to discipline and classroom management as key problem areas where she needed more preparation.

During Miss Wilson's first year, she experienced frustration and desparation as she confronted many of the issues aliuded to in her preparation experiences. They were different from the abstractions she had encountered earlier in her textbook and classroom experiences, though. She had expected the students to fit the *generic* models she had read and had heard about in her classes. She was overwhelmed to discover that she would be dealing with the issues as they came to her through the unique personalities of 180 seventh graders, people she did not understand.

Similarly, Miss Wilson had expected she would be able to slip into one of the *model* teaching styles she had studied in her "Search for a Teaching Style" class. She was amazed to discover that, contrary to what she had identified herself to be in that class, she was not a prepackaged *Type A* teacher and would have to deal with the issues and the students through the feelings and idiosyncracies which make Debbie Wilson, Debbie Wilson. She discovered that she needed feedback and yet had few of the skills to elicit and deal with it.

As we observed, she experienced conflicts between her personality traits and her needs. She used humor as a defense, a *life preserver* of sorts, and as a controlling devise. Her humor, however, seemed to

discourage others from giving sincere feedback, something she desparately needed. Further, it was a crutch which dissuaded her from benefiting most fully from feedback opportunities when they did arise. Miss Wilson found herself trying to function freely, but within paradoxes. It was as though she would have to give up the bouyant *life preserver* of humor in order to obtain a firm grasp on the *vessel of* self understanding which would be derived from feedback. Her fear of sinking and general irritation and frustration with her circumstance left Miss Wilson unresolved and on her way to becoming like the cynical teachers she had vowed not to model.

The expectations of students, herself, potential teaching problems and her means for coping, along with her expectations of her need for feedback were the focus of much of Miss Wilson's struggles during her first year of teaching. She discovered she had not been adequately prepared for the realities of teaching and, most specifically, for the idiosyncratic means by which she would have to deal with each unique circumstance as it arose. Consequently, we can raise the following questions:

1.How can we better prepare teachers for the realities of teaching, helping them to consider the uniqueness of their personality and its influence on a teaching role?

2.How can we provide a non-didactic learning experience which will most accurately represent what it is like functioning as a teacher of real students, each with unique personalities and problems?

3.How can we prepare teachers to use available evaluation opportunities as well as self evaluation techniques in assessing their performance as teachers?

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